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ABSTRACT

Youth apprenticeship programs differ from the registered apprenticeship that is regulated by federal and state governments. Defined as a "learning program for young people, age 16 and older, that integrates on-the-job training with school-based instruction, that bridges high school and postsecondary schooling, and that results in both academic credentials and certification of mastery of work skills," youth apprenticeship has gained attention as a policy strategy for improving the school-to-work transition of many youth. Many of the key components of the youth apprenticeship program concept are based on the design elements of European youth training systems. Despite its promise as a strategy for accomplishing many of the goals of the educational reform movement, youth apprenticeship has also remained controversial. The following have been cited as potential problems of youth apprenticeship programs: conflicts with labor unions; the need for schools to make significant changes in instructional methods, scheduling, and basic assumptions; the need for increased financial support from business; and the danger of tracking students at an early age. (An annotated bibliography of 15 print resources on youth apprenticeship programs is provided along with the names and addresses of four resource organizations concerned with youth apprenticeship programs.) (MN)

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Youth Apprenticeship
Trends and Issues Alerts

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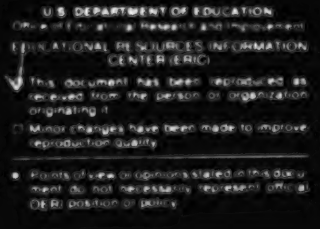
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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERTS

by Susan Imel 1993

Youth Apprenticeship

Spurred by changes in the economy and the educational environment, youth apprenticeship is emerging as one of the hot topics in education (Finegold 1993). The need to prepare more workers with the skills and knowledge to sustain a high-wage economy has focused attention on youth apprenticeship as a policy strategy for improving the school-to-work transition for many youth in the United States (ibid., Jobs for the Future 1993). Defined as "a learning program for young people, age 16 and older, that integrates on-the-job learning with school-based instruction, that bridges high school and postsecondary schooling, and that results in both academic credentials and certification of mastery of work skills," youth apprenticeship should not be confused with the registered apprenticeship program that is regulated by federal and state governments (JFF 1993, n.p.).

Proponents point to European youth training systems as the source of many of the components underlying youth apprenticeship, such as (1) significant coordination between employers, schools, labor, and government; (2) integration of school- and work-based learning experiences; (3) broadly recognized certification of academic and occupational skill mastery; (4) a coherent system that serves a significant number of young people; and (5) high-skill, high-wage career routes that do not require a bachelor's degree (ibid.). Although no single model of youth apprenticeship has surfaced, Jobs for the Future (ibid.) has identified the following key design elements of youth apprenticeship:

- Employers provide both paid work experience and structured worksite learning.
- Schools integrate academic and vocational learning.
- School and workplace learning are coordinated and integrated.
- High school and postsecondary programs are articulated and last at least 2 years.
- Completers receive widely recognized credentials of both academic and occupational skill mastery.
- Programs are governed by broad coalitions of institutional partners.

Despite its emergence as a promising strategy to accomplish many of the goals of the educational reform movement, the topic of youth apprenticeship is not without controversy. Issues related to it include its name, the potential for conflict with union apprenticeship programs, the need for businesses and schools to make changes for it to succeed, and the type of leadership needed for establishing it as a national policy. Because its use leads to confusion with the registered apprenticeship program, the term *youth apprenticeship* is the source of much of the resistance to the movement. Youth apprenticeship is applied to a range of school-to-work transition programs that share only some of the features of the registered apprenticeship programs.

Related to the terminology issue is the issue of potential conflicts with unions. Some labor unions that have run their own training programs for years see youth apprenticeship as a threat, worrying that young, cheaper apprenticeships will cause wages to decline (Tifft 1992). Also, in initiating youth apprenticeship programs state education agencies have approached the matter of union collaboration quite differently: in Wisconsin, unions were bypassed but in West Virginia union support was enlisted ("School Chiefs Tout Apprenticeship Programs" 1992).

Since youth apprenticeship does not represent "business as usual," the extent to which schools and businesses are willing to make changes is another area of potential controversy. To ensure its success, schools will need to change their methods, schedules, and assumptions, and businesses will have to make larger investments in training. Concern has also been expressed that youth apprenticeship could lead to tracking students at an early age (Tifft 1992). Also at issue is who should take the leadership for developing youth apprenticeship as a national policy. Should youth apprenticeship programs start as a government initiative or as a business initiative for which the government paves the way (Filipczak 1992)?

At this juncture, youth apprenticeship shows promise of being a workable educational reform strategy for the United States, and policy makers are viewing it with keen interest. Additional information about youth apprenticeship programs, including many of its related issues, can be acquired by consulting the following resources.

Print Resources

Council of Chief State School Officers. ***European Lessons from School and the Workplace***. Washington, DC: Resource Center on Educational Equity, CCSSO, 1991. (ED 346 286).

Reports on a 1991 study tour to Germany, Denmark, and Sweden that investigated youth education and training policies, systems, methods of financing, and programs and makes recommendations for youth education and training in the United States.

Education Writers Association. ***Training for Work: What the U.S. Can Learn from Europe***. Washington, DC: EWA, 1990. (ED 327 641).

Describes a study of school-to-work transition programs for youth and retraining programs for adult workers in West Germany, Sweden, and England to identify European solutions to developing high-skill youth and adult workers. Contains newspaper articles on European experience and U.S. failures and successes using techniques borrowed from these countries.

Filipczak, B. "Apprenticeships from High School to High Skills." ***Training*** 29, no. 4 (April 1992): 23-29.

Discusses the emergence of youth apprenticeships programs that offer relevant, work-based learning to noncollege-bound youth, preparing them for high-skill jobs and building generic employability skills.

Finegold, D. ***Making Apprenticeships Work. RAND Issue Paper No. 1***. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, March 1993.

Outlines policy issues related to the implementation of youth apprenticeship programs in the United States.

Hallock, M., ed. ***Worker Education and Training in Oregon: The Challenge for Labor. Report of AFL-CIO Committee on Worker Education and Training Adopted by the 37th Annual Convention of the Oregon AFL-CIO.*** Eugene: Labor Education and Research Center, University of Oregon, 1992. (ED 353 369).

Describes the steps taken by the Oregon AFL-CIO to support the adoption of a high-skill approach, including a carefully structured youth apprenticeship program.

Hamilton, S. F.; Hamilton, M. A.; and Wood, B. J. ***Creating Apprenticeship Opportunities for Youth.*** Ithaca, NY: Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Cornell University, September 1991. (ED 342 956).

Describes the Youth Apprenticeship Demonstration Project in Broome County, NY, which enrolls 25 high school juniors from 5 school systems in newly created apprenticeships in manufacturing and engineering technology, administration and office technology, and health care.

Jobs for the Future. ***Learning that Works: A Youth Apprenticeship Briefing Book.*** Cambridge, MA: JFF, May 1993.

A set of briefing materials designed to provide a quick, current overview of youth apprenticeship in the United States, including what it is, where it is, design and implementation issues, and policy innovations.

National Alliance of Business. ***Real Jobs for Real People: An Employer's Guide to Youth Apprenticeship.*** Washington, DC: NAB, 1992. (ED 353 449).

Provides a guide for employers interested in establishing a youth apprenticeship program that will serve its labor needs. Addresses the internal support that a business must generate and gives tips on choosing an educational partner.

Roditi, H. F. ***How Much Does a Youth Apprenticeship Program Cost, and Who Will Pay for It?*** West Somerville, MA: Jobs for the Future, August 1991. (ED 337 635).

This working paper explores costs involved in funding programs that offer a structured transition from high school to high skills careers and offers three alternative models for effective and cost-efficient programs.

Rosenbaum, J. E., and others. ***Youth Apprenticeship in America: Guidelines for Building an Effective System.*** Washington, DC: Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, William T. Grant Foundation, 1992.

Seven papers offer teachers and employers a menu of alternative approaches to apprenticeship and suggest the advantages and disadvantages of each.

"School Chiefs Tout Apprenticeship Programs." ***Vocational Training News*** 23, no. 46, November 19, 1992, pp. 1, 3.

Describes reactions of some chief state school officers to development of youth apprenticeship programs in their states.

Shenon, C. ***Union Perspectives on New Work-based Youth Apprenticeship Initiatives.*** Cambridge, MA: Jobs for the Future, January 1992. (ED 341 845).

Summarizes views of 14 labor officials regarding their attitudes toward the youth apprenticeship approach.

Tifft, S. E. ***The Challenge: To Enhance the Competitiveness of American Workers through a System of Youth Apprenticeships that Forges Stronger Links between Enterprises and Schools. EQW Issues.*** Philadelphia, PA: National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce, October 1992. (ED 349 473).

Reviews implications of research for enterprises, schools, workers, and public policy in addressing the question of whether youth apprenticeships can work in the United States.

U.S. Congress. ***Oversight Hearings on School-to-Work Transition Programs. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Employment Opportunities of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, 102nd Congress, Second Session (May 6 and June 17, 1992).*** Washington, DC: House Committee on Education and Labor, 1992. (ED 350 477).

Records the oral and written testimony given at a congressional hearing on school-to-work transitions, focusing on four local programs that involved cooperation among industry, labor, schools, and the local community.

Vickers, M. ***Building a National System for School-to-Work Transition: Lessons from Britain and Australia.*** Cambridge, MA: Jobs for the Future, August, 1991. (ED 337 636).

By contrasting developments in Britain and Australia, this paper asks what role governments can play in shaping the provision of education and training and influencing the decisions young people make about school and work.

Resource Organizations

Council of Chief State School Officers, One Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-1431 (202/408-5505).

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Center on Education and Training for Employment, The Ohio State University, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090 (614/292-4353; Internet: ericacve@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu.).

Jobs for the Future, 1815 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140 (617/661-3411).

National Alliance of Business, 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005-3917 (202/289-2917).

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Work-Based Learning, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room N4649, Washington, DC 20210 (202/523-0281).

Youthwire, An Electronic Bulletin Board for Employment and Training Practitioners, Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University, 60 Turner Street, P.O. Box 9110, Waltham, MA 02254-9110 (617/736-3770; Internet: brandeis@tecnet.me.tufts.edu.).

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